

MENSES

men·ses: *n.* The monthly flow of blood and cellular debris from the uterus that begins at puberty and ceases at menopause.

by,

Mz Armageddon

What possessed me to write a zine on menstruation? Because menstruation is a part of every woman's life and tends to dictate how we live our lives when we are held down by traditional disposable menstrual products. We have to bring extra pads and tampons with us everywhere we go. If we start bleeding five days early and haven't packed our purses full of tampons yet, we have to stuff our underwear full of scratchy toilet paper and, until we get home, we are in fear that a wad of bloody toilet paper will fall out of our pant leg. Five minute breaks between classes aren't long enough to change a tampon and get our books from our locker. We stain panties and sheets when shitty products leak or move. We shell out our hard-earned money each month to big corporations. We litter our Mother Earth with trash. **And it is all unnecessary.**

I am 23 years old and have been menstruating since I was 12. I used disposable pads for my first few periods,

Read: Cunt: A Declaration of Independence, by Inga Muscio, Seal Press, 2002.

Herstory: The Museum of Menstruation, <http://www.mum.org>

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Resources:

Cups: <http://www.divacup.com>
<http://www.thekeeper.com>

Cloth pads: <http://www.lunapads.com>
<http://www.gladrags.com>

DIY cloth pads:
<http://www.diapersewing.com/clothpads.htm>
http://www.wen.org.uk/sanpro/reports/makeyourown_web.pdf
<http://bloodsisters.org/bloodsisters/images/makepads.pdf>
<http://pacificcoast.net/~manymoons/howto.htm>
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TSS: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/toxicshock_t.htm

Dioxin: http://www.estronaut.com/a/dioxin_tampons.htm

until one day in middle school when it came during gym class; I didn't have any pads in my backpack. A girl in my class gave me a Tampax tampon. It was terrible - it started poking out and was really uncomfortable. I quickly went back to pads. Eventually I started using Playtex tampons which weren't quite as terrible as Tampax. In my senior year of high school, I saw a commercial for OB and thought that it would be easier to use tampons without applicators. It was easier, but I still had times when my flow was light and after six hours it would hurt to take out, the dry fibers scratching at my poor coochie. And I still stained panties and sheets when my tampon would leak or my pad didn't cover my ass when I slept on my back. I would actually sleep with a nighttime pad on and a panty liner perpendicular to my pad so my ass would be covered.

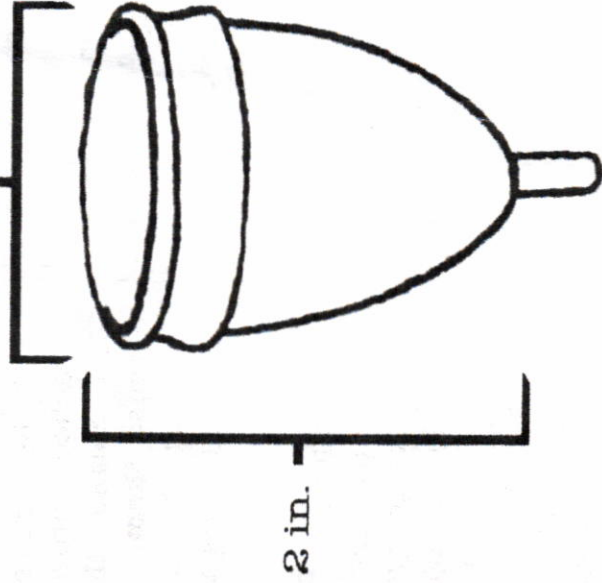
Then, after high school ended, I bought Cunt by Inga Muscio and joined an online group of body-positive women where I learned I had more options than pads and tampons. I was

immediately interested in a menstrual cup as soon as I heard of it, and I saved up \$35 to buy one online. I loved it! Well, once I figured out how to use it. It held so much fluid I could wear it three times as long as tampons even on my heavy days, and didn't leak on my panties! For some reason, it wouldn't stay sealed when I slept, but I hated using disposable pads. They are bunched and would get sweaty, and still leaked up my butt crack when I slept on my back, staining my panties and sheets. So I took Inga's advice and slept naked with a towel between my legs. It worked, but I still wanted something else so I wouldn't be sleeping with a towel. I saved up again and bought some cloth pads for \$45 online. I loved them to death! They are pretty and soft -- not sweaty -- on my ass. And they are actually constructed to handle your flow when you sleep. The long ones are a full foot (that's right, twelve inches) long which keeps my sheets clean when I sleep on my back. I cannot wait to have a daughter and give her her first cloth pads and menstrual cup.

Finally, disposable pads and tampons are not healthy for women. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the last active surveillance of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) was done in 1987 and 5% of TSS cases are fatal. I wouldn't trust something enough to put it in my holiest of holies if it hadn't been studied actively for 17 years. Menstrual cups have not been linked to TSS. Another health concern is dioxin. According to *Ms. Tampon Goes to Washington: The Dioxin Controversy* a report on Estronaut.com, there are "unresolved concerns about a chemical called dioxin, its levels in tampons, and its potential to cause female cancers." Don't risk your health for disposable tampons.

It is **sanitary**, it is **economical**, it is **environmentally sound**, and it is **healthy** to use alternative menstrual products such as washable cloth pads and reusable menstrual cups. Invest in yourself and the earth.

1 1/2 in.

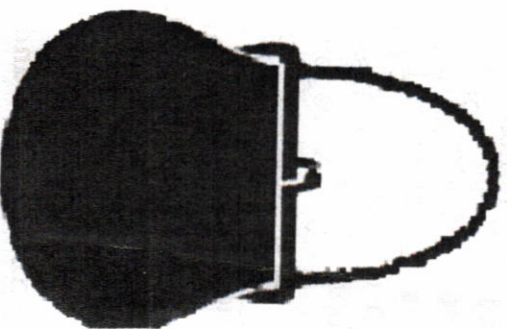


2 in.

In our society it is acceptable to wash and reuse bath towels, dishes, underwear, toothbrushes, bed sheets, among other things, and we consider that sanitary. Yet our society is obsessed with the requirement that we bleed onto bleached throwaway cotton products. **Soap cleans things, making it sanitary to reuse them.** Also, there are no regulations that the tampon and pad industries have to follow regarding sanitation.

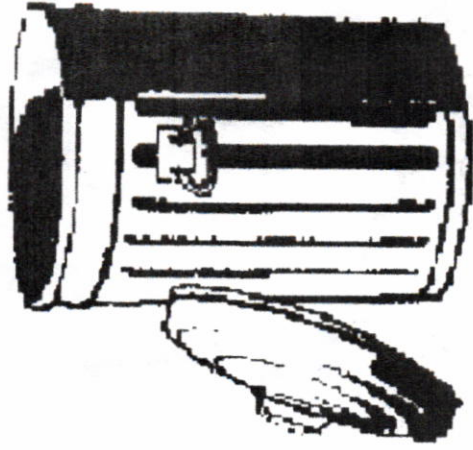
In the US, an estimated 7 billion tampons and 13 billion pads and their packaging get dumped into landfills and sewage systems every year. This is incredibly damaging to our environment, not to mention disrespectful to our Mother Earth. Our children will have to pay the price. We should wake up, accept our responsibility and start trying to fix the damage now. The way our society makes products that aren't biodegradable and then throws them away to be buried in a landfill after a single use is disgusting.

Take less
&
cash from
here...

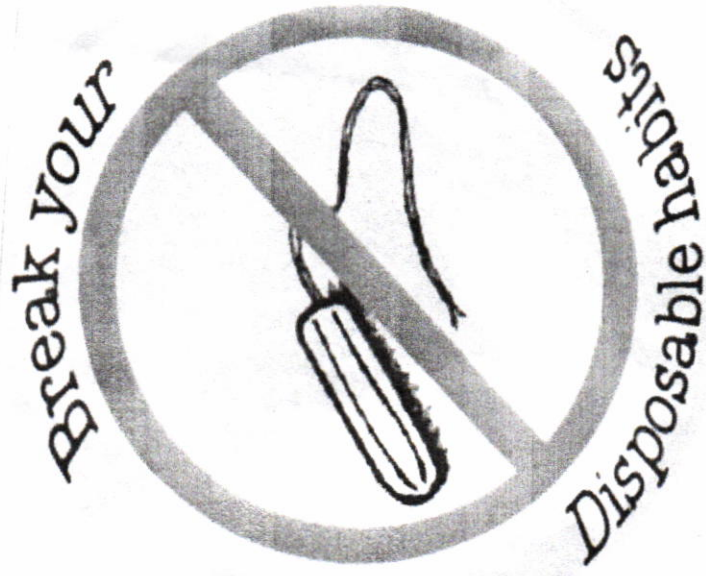


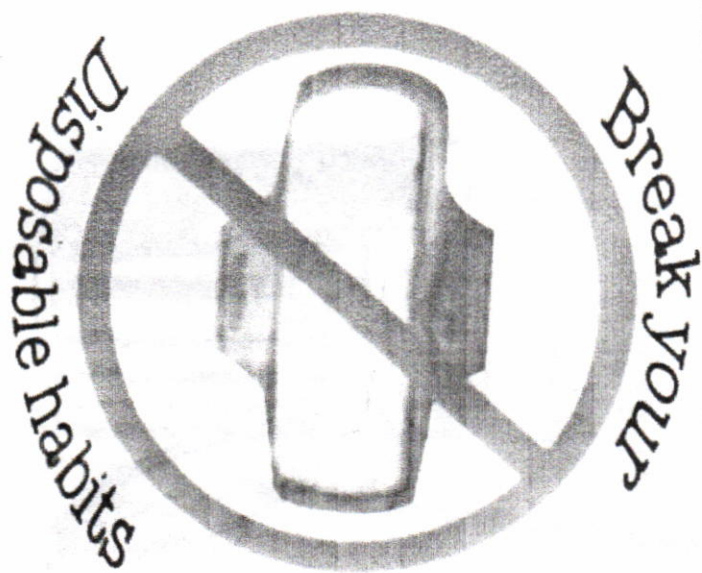
menstrual products!

Put less
trash in
here...



By using alternative





lose? Only more of your money wasted on disposable pads and tampons.

Almost every woman I know who has switched to alternative menstrual products says that she now enjoys her period more. My sister has endometriosis and says her cup helps (but not completely eliminates) her crippling cramps. I no longer worry about being caught without protection when I'm at school while on the rag, since I simply remove my cup, empty it, and put it back in. When in a public rest room they are easy to clean in the stall by wiping it off with toilet paper or brining in a bottle of water to rise it off with. I've heard of women who had seven day long periods when they used tampons, and now they have four day long periods with the cup. And don't be surprised if after a few months of seeing your blood in pure form, rather than absorbed into a tampon or pad, you get the urge to paint with your blood or fertilize your favorite plant with it.

Why do I care so much about the environment? Because the air **stinks**, the water is **dirty**, and the land is **littered with trash**. We are leaving a big mess for future generations to clean up and the longer we let it go on, the worse it will be for them.

How much do you spend a month on menstrual products? A box of tampons, some panty liners, maybe some pads...that could add up to \$20. A menstrual cup costs between \$20 and \$35 and will last 10 years. An investment of \$45 or so in some cloth pads will also last you many, many years. Hell, you could even buy some fabric and make your own. Don't be a slave to bleached white cotton throwaway products that drain your wallet and pollute the earth. Invest in yourself and the earth.

One perceived problem with cloth pads is that they will be hard to take care of. I am a college student and I manage to care for mine just fine with very little time and effort.

After each use, I soak in the bathroom sink in cold water for 3 hours or so to loosen the blood (hot water will set it). You could use a bucket, a wide mouth water bottle, a Tupperware container, anything really. After soaking, I wring them out and just toss them in the washer and dryer with my next load of towels.

Do you get squicked out thinking about putting a cup up in your cunt? It's your body, honey, it's OK to touch it. Imagine if you were raised to think that touching your eyeball was sinful, sick, and gross. It would be pretty hard to use contacts then, huh? Your body is not gross, and touching it is not sick. Get to know your cunt and all its parts. Inner and outer labia, perineum, vagina, cervix, and the wonderful clitoris. The cup takes a bit of practice to insert and remove, but hey, so did tampons. Most women I know, myself included, can't feel it once it's inserted. It's a little rubber or latex bell shaped cup, it won't bite you! And if you try it, you might love it. If not, they come with a money-back guarantee. What's to

